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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 000613

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/ELA (IRWIN)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/19/2018

TAGS: PREL LE AE

SUBJECT: LEBANON: UAE WILLING TO BE OPTIMISTIC ON DOHA TALKS

REF: STATE 52061

Classified by Charge d'Affaires Martin Quinn, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) In a May 19 discussion of reftel points on Lebanon, the Charge stressed to MFA Under Secretary Saif Sultan al-Aryani that the USG supports ongoing Arab League mediation and condemns Hizballah attempts to force negotiations at gunpoint. Al-Aryani agreed that Hizballah's weapons were a problem and their use in recent weeks broke promises made previously. He opined that parties to the discussions in Doha were "getting closer by the day" as Lebanese leaders spent time with one another and sensed that their own public was blaming them for lack of progress. He was willing to be optimistic that something positive could come out of the Doha talks -- in which Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed (AbZ) continues to participate.

¶2. (C) Characterizing the ongoing talks as something of a "last chance" for the Lebanese, al-Aryani hoped for progress for the sake of Lebanon and the region. Reminded that pressure on Syria and Iran was also called for, al-Aryani said any immediate decisions in that regard could impact ongoing discussions; the MFA prefers to see whether things move forward in Doha rather than potentially upset the balance by fingering Damascus and Teheran at this time. Charge requested that the essence of reftel points be shared with AbZ, reiterating our encouragement of the ongoing talks while stressing again the unhelpful role of Hizballah.

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